

APPLICATIONS
STORIES &
DIALOGUES

A Smile Smiles

BERRIE HEESSEN

“Sir, there’s a drawing pin under your chair.”

Spoon grins. It is funny and also a bit silly to shout out ‘drawing pin’ in the classroom during a test.

Maybe it is a better idea to leave the pin, when they go home in the afternoon and the teacher still has some marking to do. And then to say nothing, go to the woods and there scream with laughter.

Spoon hasn’t made up his mind yet. Spoon wants to think about it a bit more and finds the drawing-pin thing a lousy idea. It has been done so often before.

Spoon wants to do something different. Like this, for instance.

One morning Spoon gets up at four. It is pitch-dark. Spoon goes to the school.

He has a small tube with him. You know, one of those tubes they say can glue a television screen to the ceiling. Small but strong. That sort of glue can glue anything. Not that Spoon cares. Spoon does not have to stick television screens to anything.

The only thing Spoon wants to do is to drip a drop of glue into the lock of the school gate. Or rather to squeeze, to press it in. That is all. Spoon knows that this drop will become rather hard, so much so that keys can’t do anything with the lock. So that keys take a day off when they find themselves in such a lock. An off-day.

Why is Spoon doing this? That is not a good question. Spoon is just doing it.

At a quarter to five in the morning Spoon gets back home, steals on his toes back to his bed and falls into an untroubled sleep. At seven o’clock Spoon is woken up, just like his classmates are around that time. That’s the way things are where Spoon lives.

Spoon is in no hurry. Around his lips hovers a smile, which fortunately doesn’t disappear when Spoon is washing himself. Of course, Spoon does not scrub extraordinarily hard to remove the smile. “That should be enough,” he mumbles when he has brushed a flannel over his cheeks.

With the utmost calm Spoon finishes off his bowl of cornflakes and the smile does not mind all the cereal going in through the mouth. The smile is indestructible.

Of course Spoon does not live on his own. Johnny, his father, lives there too. That morning Johnny does not see his son in the kitchen. Johnny is too busy with other business. What kind of business? Business, of course.

Charissima is his sister. Fourteen years old according to her passport, which Spoon is not allowed to see. “Issi,” as Spoon pronounces this mouthful of a name, is obviously not in a good mood today. She does not even see Spoon. And that is why it is possible that morning for a smile to remain unwashed on Spoon’s face and not to be noticed by anyone. “Fine with me,” Spoon mumbles to himself.

Spoon goes to school just a little bit later than usual. He is not in a hurry. Of course there is a lot of commotion in the school yard. It is buzzing with excitement. It is not one of those days when eleven men with a British passport have or

have not done something wonderful with a ball. But there is something going on. It is not an ordinary day. Spoon joins a group of boys from Class 5B. That is the class Spoon is in.

"Hello," Spoon mumbles.

"Have you heard?" Danny shrieks.

Spoon grins. All the boys know but Danny has to bellow above all the noise as usual. The smile is frightened a bit by all the light and the buzzing and hides in the shade.

"No, what?" asks Spoon.

"The gate, stupid, the gate!" Danny screams into his ear.

"The gate was stuck fast this morning, with glue," Robby explains.

"What do you mean, glue?" Spoon asks without a visible smile.

"The gate, it was glued shut last night. No one could get in this morning. They had to get a locksmith to open it."

At last, the story is told.

"Stuck the gate fast with glue, who did that?" Spoon asks innocently.

That is of course exactly the question all the boys are asking themselves. "The Black Curl from Class 6" comes out on top. He was the one who called Legg "Peg-Leg" two weeks ago. And he also imitated him, as if Legg had a limp. Just the sort of thing to annoy Legg, who always wants to show that he can still run fastest.

"He's a rabbit," says Ronny, "Scared of growing old."

Everyone laughs. The boys young, Legg old.

Spoon laughs too but without a smile. Smile keeps a low profile. Still talking, the lads shuffle in. School begins.

It is predictable what Legg is going to ask Class 5B in class 5B that morning. Whether anyone knows anything about the affair of the glued lock.

Margi is ready for this. Legg has hardly finished his question when she says, "I don't know if that's what you mean, but my nose was running a lot this morning when I was near the gate."

Legg takes it well, although you can see that he is furious. "Well, if the stuff in your nose is so sticky, your nose would have been glued shut by now." Speaking through his nose, Legg continues, "If the zztuff in your nozzz wazzz zzoo zzticky, your nozzz would have been oberated ubon by now."

There is some discussion but Legg realizes that it isn't getting him any further. It seems he has to be in another class.

During the break the smile slowly creeps back around Spoon's lips. It was bound to happen. This time Spoon does not mix with the kids, who are now all talking nonsense in nasal voices. He's got a lot to think about. He had already decided long before that morning that he wasn't going to say anything to the other boys.

"Real pleasure can't be shared," Spoon mumbles. You should enjoy it as slowly as possible.

Smile smiles. It is only in the woods that smile will change its appearance. Then smile will change into wildly thundering heavy laughter. Rolling, rumbling laughter that makes Spoon's belly shake. In the woods where there is no one who will be surprised about the laughter that is laughing its head off among the trees.

Manual: A Smile Smiles

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QUESTIONS: SPOON'S SMILE

1. Does Spoon know that there is a smile hanging around his face?
2. Who is the main character of the story: Spoon or the smile around his face?
3. What kind of guy is Spoon?
4. Can you have an expression on your face without knowing it?
5. Can a facial expression go its own way?

THEME 1: PLEASURE AND BEING ALONE

Some experiences one can share with others, other experiences are private. We can choose not to exchange some experiences. This can be the case with ordinary experiences, about which you don't want to say a thing. It can also happen with extraordinary experiences, those you want

to keep for yourself or those you don't want to share with anyone:

Can you find examples of experiences about which you don't want to say anything?

Let's look at a very extraordinary experience, a case of mystification, published in the French *Encyclopedie des farces, attrapes et mystifications* (Pauvert, 1964).

Comical folklore and comedy are most often meant to let the other laugh by telling a joke, doing a nice tric, or playing comedy. With mystifications, the only one laughing is the mystifier, and he is doing this secretly. It has just one goal: humoristic satisfaction.

*For example: R. Dorgeles placed an announcement in the papers: **Wanted. Strong man for delicate business. Paid well.** He received 50 answers to his ad and he responded to 26 of them. He told the 26 men that the 'delicate business' had to be done very discretely, it might take an hour and would be rewarded with 10,000 francs. Eleven strong men were still interested. He sent these 11 men more information: it is about an old lady, living in a cottage, no neighbours and no dogs. Still, six of the eleven did not see a problem. Dorgeles invited them all at a certain time in a certain bar to get acquainted. He was in that bar at that time, but he never made himself known. He drank his cognac, and enjoyed immensely the idea of being together with at least six potential murderers.*

So, if Mister Dorgeles had never done anything to let another hear the story, we would not have known it. Are people able to do something like Mister Dorgeles and be silent about it, not even trust their experience to paper? In movies we often see people telling their secret the minute before they die. Can it be that people, walking around with secrets-to-be-told-the-last-minute, never get a chance to tell their story?

QUESTIONS:

PLEASURE: ALONE OR TOGETHER?

1. Is it possible to enjoy something on your own?
2. Can you remember experiences that you have never told anyone else?
(To ask this question does not mean that children must tell their experiences. Answers can be given by telling about the circumstances, the character of

the experience (joyful, boring, outrageous).

3. Is it possible to enjoy an experience more intensely alone than with someone else?
4. Can you imagine doing something like Spoon and never telling anybody about it?
 - a. Why does Spoon go into the woods alone?
 - b. Where would you go to after doing something like Spoon?
5. Who would like to live with the knowledge or secret, that you have done something like Spoon and have never told anybody about it?

THEME 2:

BETWEEN DOING AND JOKING

Spoon is making a joke that keeps the whole school busy. But he never tells anybody that he did it. Many enjoyed Spoon's deed, although the one that first tried to enter the gate and failed to open it, didn't enjoy that moment at all. That person had to do — God knows what — to solve the problem at a very early hour.

Of course, Spoon's deed has its other side: school could not be opened in time. The porter got annoyed, Spoon was threatening the rules, at least the unwritten rules. Is it always bad to threaten unwritten rules? When is it bad and when is it not bad? How far can a joke be carried through?

DOING:

WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN RULES

Rules can be very decisive during our lives. Some rules are written, others are not. Is it an unwritten rule that one sends a greeting card when a baby is born? That one is not supposed to cycle over the school garden can be a written rule if it is part of the school rules.

Mark among the following cases whether it is following a rule or not, and whether that rule is written down somewhere as far as you know.

1. Sending a newborn card when a baby is born.
 rule no rule written unwritten
2. Brushing your teeth before going to bed.
 rule no rule written unwritten

3. To stand up, in a bus when an old lady is looking for a place.
 rule no rule written unwritten
4. Celebrating your birthday.
 rule no rule written unwritten
5. To return a purse that has been found on the street.
 rule no rule written unwritten
6. Flushing the toilet after you have used it.
 rule no rule written unwritten
7. Eating a candy.
 rule no rule written unwritten
8. Stop before a red streetlight.
 rule no rule written unwritten
9. Where you are going to on holiday.
 rule no rule written unwritten
10. Laughing when the teacher makes a joke.
 rule no rule written unwritten
11. Thinking about what you have been doing before going to sleep.
 rule no rule written unwritten

**THEME:
WHEN TO KEEP DEEDS PRIVATE**

Spoon violates an unwritten rule. It might be that this rule was written down. If the glueing of the gate is considered to be damaging school properties it is probably violating a written rule.

At the moment Leggs enters the classroom to ask whether anyone knows about the incident, Spoon keeps silent. Should we always say what we have done? For some, this is a matter of principle: we should always speak the truth. Others stick to the circumstances as a last resort to decide what to do. And some of us will decide about the case depending on the motives Spoon had for doing his deed.

QUESTIONS: SPOON'S DEED

1. Is one allowed to keep silent about one's deeds?
2. Should Spoon have spoken when Leggs entered the classroom?
3. If Spoon was willing to talk, what would you advise as the best moment to tell that he was responsible for the incident?
4. Spoon does not say anything in response to Legg's question, "Who knows about the glueing case?" Is Spoon lying, or is it more difficult not to say that you are responsible?

**DOING:
DRAWING AND QUARRELLING!**

1. Make a rather abstract drawing of your teacher, while in the woods laughing, after he or she did something similar to what Spoon did.
2. Make a drawing with a trio of the same subject on transparent paper — one makes the woods, one draws the teacher, one draws the laugh.

Afterwards the three drawings are placed over each other. Do *quarrel* about which drawing comes on top.

Explanation: At school, most of the time it is important to work together. In this case it is proposed to work together and quarrel a bit as well.

Underlying question: Can one learn to quarrel? If it is necessary to work together, is it not also necessary to learn to quarrel?

DOING: THE UNKNOWN DEEDS

Imagine for any of the following persons, something that they have done and which they never told anyone else. It might be anything — something completely unimportant or something very important.

1. President Bush
2. The man or woman in the candy shop around the corner
3. your mother
4. The bus driver who brings you to school, or whom you meet daily
5. Rembrandt or Vincent van Gogh (or a national cultural hero)
6. Madonna
7. your neighbour
8. Tintin or Asterix